

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A specimen sensing apparatus comprising:
  - a specimen container which is vertically positioned by a container holder of a columnar rack type and conveyed by a belt conveyor;
  - an infrared CCD camera configured to pick up an infrared image of the specimen container;
  - a visible image converter which converts the infrared image picked up by the infrared CCD camera into a visible image;
  - an image signal processing unit which processes and converts one of the infrared image and the visible image into a signal that is suitable to measure a specimen amount; and
- 15 a specimen amount measuring unit which measures an amount of specimen contained in the specimen container in response to the signal processed by the image signal processing unit.
- 20 2. The specimen sensing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising control means for starting to operate the infrared CCD camera when the specimen container comes in front of the camera and stopping operating the camera when the specimen amount measuring unit sends a measured signal.